

Moving Forward

Westhampton Council on Aging

Programs and Services for Active Living at 60+



Important Information during the Current Coronavirus Disease 2019

Westhampton COA Events:

All Westhampton COA events and activities are cancelled until further notice. Library programs are also cancelled and the library itself is closed until further notice. During this time, we are following social distancing guidelines and avoiding unnecessary gatherings. For everyone's health and safety, please avoid close contact with others.

Westhampton COVID-19 updates and preparedness

Please be advised that the Town of Westhampton has declared a State of Emergency and is currently working hard with the Board of Health on coordinating a response to COVID-19. The Town has also posted useful information on the Town website: www.westhampton-ma.com/. Be sure to check it often.

Would you like a **non-medical check-in phone call** from a volunteer with the Council on Aging? If so, please specify this when you call (413) 203-3086 and provide your contact information.

Guidelines for Sickness:

- If you are feeling sick, call your primary care doctor on the phone for guidance.
- FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES, CALL **911**.

Contacts for NON-emergency assistance for Westhampton Residents:

Westhampton Inquiries and Wrap-Around Services: Administration@westhamptonma.org or call (413) 203-3086; **specify if you would like a non-medical check-in phone call from a COA volunteer.**

Council on Aging: (413) 203-9808

Foothills Health District/Health Agent (Mark Bushee): 413-824-5132

Also available to answer questions regarding local action against Covid-19 is Select board Chairman Phil Dowling at 413-246-5766.

To receive important messages from CODE RED go to this website: www.westhampton-ma.com/fire-department/webforms/code-red and fill out the form.

Assistance from the State of Massachusetts:

Call 2-1-1 for COVID-19 Information and Referrals to reach the Massachusetts State Health Help Line (24/7 service) or go to: <https://mass211.org/>

Important Newsletter Articles on COVID-19:

This newsletter contains these important pages on the Coronavirus disease from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (which is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control). Please read them carefully:

- Facts about COVID-19
- What Do Older Adults Need To Know?
- What to do if you are sick with COVID-19 or suspect you are infected

Credible Website Sources for Updates on COVID-19:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health: www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19

Center for Disease Control (CDC): www.cdc.gov/

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and you

What is coronavirus disease 2019? Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can I get COVID-19? Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the world. Risk of infection from the virus that causes COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Learn more about places with ongoing spread at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/transmission.html. The current list of global locations with cases of COVID-19 is available on CDC's web page at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/locations-confirmed-cases.html.

How does COVID-19 spread? The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but is now spreading from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus? Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine? There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

Is there a treatment? There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

For more info: www.cdc.gov/COVID19

What do Older Adults Need to Know about COVID-19?

(Adapted from ACL, the Administration for Community Living: <https://acl.gov/>)

Early data suggest older people are twice as likely to have serious COVID-19 illness. This may be because immune systems change with age, making it harder to fight off diseases and infection. Older adults also are more likely to have underlying health conditions that make it harder to cope with and recover from illness.

In addition, people of all ages, with or without disabilities, seem to be at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19 if they have serious chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease.

Reducing exposure is especially important for people at higher risk of complications!

If you are at higher risk, CDC recommends that you:

- Stay at home as much as possible if COVID-19 is spreading in your community.
- Make sure you have access to several weeks of medications and supplies in case you need to stay home for prolonged periods of time. CDC has great resources to help you plan.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often.
- Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces.
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel. Stay up to date on CDC Travel Health Notices (www.cdc.gov/)
- Plan now for what you will do if you, or people you rely on for support, become ill.

Everyday actions to prevent illness

Everyone, regardless of age or disability, should follow CDC's recommendations to help prevent the spread of all respiratory diseases, including colds and flu and COVID-19.

For example:

- ⇒ Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- ⇒ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- ⇒ Stay home when you are sick.
- ⇒ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- ⇒ Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- ⇒ Follow CDC's recommendations for using a face mask.
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - Face masks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of face masks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).
- ⇒ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- ⇒ If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Watch for symptoms and emergency warning signs

- COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor.

- If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. These include:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or inability to arouse
 - Bluish lips or face

This list is NOT all inclusive. Consult your medical provider for any other symptom that is severe or concerning.

Follow Massachusetts State Guidance:

www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19

What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

If you are sick with COVID-19 or suspect you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, follow the steps below to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis. Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.

People: As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

Animals: Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.

Call ahead before visiting your doctor

If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

Wear a face mask

You should wear a face mask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a face mask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a face mask if they enter your room.

Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can; immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand san-

itizer that contains at least 60% alcohol covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.

Avoid sharing personal household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

Clean your hands often

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Clean all "high-touch" surfaces every day

High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Monitor your symptoms

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing). Before seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19. Put on a face mask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed.

Ask your healthcare provider to call the local or state health department. Persons who are placed under active monitoring or facilitated self-monitoring should follow instructions provided by their local health department or occupational health professionals, as appropriate.

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive.

Discontinuing home isolation

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19

Finally, a few things to keep in mind during this time:

- ⇒ With the nicer weather, get out and take a walk or go for a ride.
- ⇒ Call your neighbor, friend or relative for a nice conversation.
- ⇒ Take care of your body. Get enough sleep, wake up at a normal hour, eat healthy food, stick to a regular routine of personal hygiene and dress.
- ⇒ Beware of information overload. We all want to stay up-to-date with the latest news, but it's easy to get overwhelmed.

Compiled from gretchenrubin.com



The Westhampton Council on Aging counts on YOUR support to continue our important programming for local seniors!

I would like to contribute to the Westhampton COA. My contribution of \$_____ is attached.

(Please write your check to The Friends of the Westhampton Council on Aging, write "program support fund" in the memo line, and mail to Charlotte Wood, 14 Perry Hill Rd. Westhampton, MA 01027.)

Name _____

Address _____

Thank You for Helping to Support Your Neighbors!

Seniors Aware of Fire Education

Senior 
SAFE

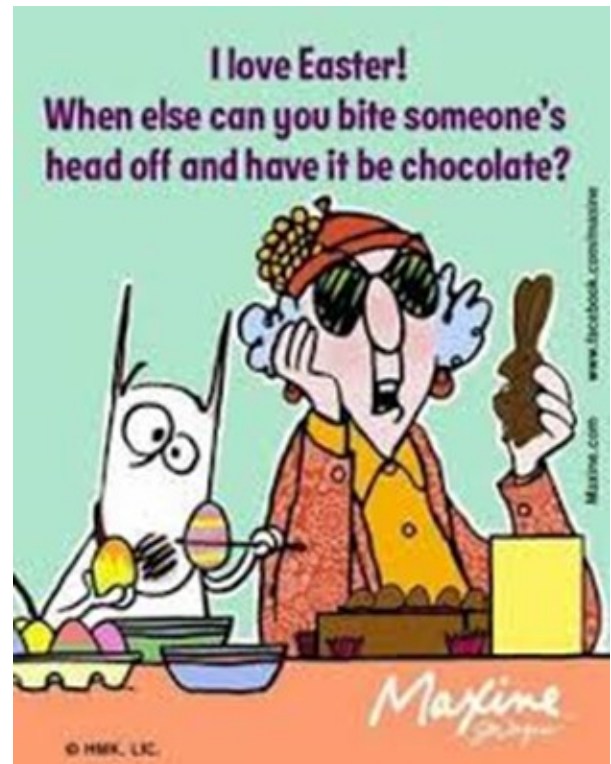
This month's topic is how to plan your escape from a fire. So, here goes:

- Know and practice two ways out of every room in your home.
- Make sure all doors and windows that lead outside open easily.
- Clear all clutter that may be in the way of your escape or make you trip or fall.
- Keep eyeglasses, keys, hearing aids, meds list, and a phone within easy reach near your bed.
- Have an outside meeting place a safe distance in front of your home where family members can meet and where first responders can see you.
- If you use a wheelchair or walker or might have a problem escaping from a fire, discuss your escape plans ahead of time with your family, building manager, neighbors and/or fire department.
- Practice your home fire escape drill twice a year.

Have a S.A.F.E. April!

--Worth Noyes, SAFE Educator
Williamsburg & Cumington Fire Departments

The Senior SAFE program is sponsored by many of your fire departments and the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services.



Would you like to receive your newsletter by email instead of snail mail?

If so, please email Kristen at **regionalcoanews@gmail.com** to be put on the email list. Include your address so I will know which mailing list to take you off of. Thanks!

Fun Facts for Taxes

Well, not really, but a catchy title, right? I read recently that we taxpayers may not be all that savvy about the trillions of dollars we hand over every year. So I read a bit more.

It seems tax collections started in Egypt during the time of the pharaohs, and were applied for various purposes in Greece and Italy and Great Britain. In more modern times, England imposed an income tax to help deal with Napoleon. Our first income tax was started to fund the Civil War in 1861 (though we did have earlier taxes, e.g., remember the Whiskey Rebellion?). Taxes have morphed, gone up and down, and actually make interesting historical reading: bebusinessed.com/history/history-of-taxes

Anyway. There are a couple of things we really should know about our taxes.

- * If you get a refund, you have given the government an interest-free loan.
- * If you are in arrears on paying taxes, it will not affect your credit score. The three credit bureaus decided there was too much chance for inaccurate information. Very comforting, right?
- * If you delay doing your taxes until October, you still have to pay by April 15 an estimate of what you will owe.
- * Keep your returns and backup paperwork at least 3 years, more if you fear an audit, might have unreported income, or went years without filing.
- * And of course there are scams. If you have had identity theft, the thieves can file a tax return in your name and claim a refund. This can go on for years if you aren't required to file yourself. If something changes and you file, you will get a note from the IRS that you have already filed! Then the work begins to clear up the mess.

Holding my SS number close,
Jean O'Neil, TRIAD committee member
413-268-2228, jeanoneilmass@gmail.com

CORONAVIRUS 19 and impact on COAs and elders in the Hilltowns

Dear friends and readers of the newsletters from the Northern Hilltowns Councils on Aging,

We apologize for any delay that has occurred in the receipt of our newsletter. We had prepared our newsletters as usual, listing all of the events, activities and programs provided by the Councils on Aging, and were ready to go to the printer when the Governor declared a state of emergency and towns that are part of our Northern Hilltowns Consortium have closed public buildings. Rather than publish programming and invitations we have decided to redo the newsletters. Instead, we are providing important guidelines that are so important in minimizing the effects on older adults in our communities.

There is a shortage of disinfectants in stores and I have trouble driving long distances, how can I disinfect my home without a special product?

For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.

Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.

Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:

5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

How can I make my own hand sanitizer?

You can use rubbing alcohol: 2/3 cup alcohol with 1/3 cup of aloe vera lotion.

Is the need to keep social distance from others really necessary?

YES! Flatten the curve before it flattens you. It's as important as washing hands frequently and correctly. Both precautions protect you, your family and friends. Many of us are already compromised by autoimmune diseases, chronic respiratory illnesses or other chronic diseases. Please remember it's as important to dry your hands thoroughly as it is to wash correctly.

Highland Valley Elder Services Remains Open

Allan Quimet, the Executive Director Of Highland Valley Elder Services is staying in touch with all of the Councils on Aging and sent the following message:

Dear Directors,
I hope you are well during this challenging time.

Please find a brief update regarding HVES programs and services in response to COVID-19. Programs and services may be reduced or delayed by our providers since we are in the people helping people business but we are not aware of any major disruption to services at this time. We have prioritized our most vulnerable consumers in the event of a worker shortage. I realize we are all trying to strike a balance of service delivery, socialization, and the need for social distancing/isolation. We are concerned about the unintended consequences to consumers and want to ensure we assist each other for their wellbeing.

To allow for maximum flexibility, we will begin to deliver individualized and portable meals to COAs who have meal sites. We will begin this process by Monday the 16th the latest. The meals will offer maximum flexibility for your unique community needs. Consumers may take them home or eat them at the community meal location. (Meals may come cold, frozen, or hot so they may require some preparation.) If you know of residents in your community, over 60, who become incapacitated by illness, please refer them to us for meals. We will initiate a three week meal delivery plan and add additional time if it becomes necessary.

Please contact our nutrition department regarding any community meal questions. Please contact or send referral to our information and referral department regarding home delivered meals or other service requests. If you have general questions feel free to contact me or anyone else at Highland Valley that may be of service to you or your community members. My best to you and your communities. I know we are a resilient bunch and support each other especially well during times like these.

Thank you,
Allan Ouimet, LICSW-MA, LCSW-CT
Executive Director

*** There is a new open line at HVES: 586-2000 ext 211 for all information and questions about COVID-19**

Staying in touch is important. Do not ride this out alone. If you need help, please reach out to friends, families or others. If you are feeling ill and wonder if you have the virus, please call your doctor first and remain in your home.

For more information about COVID-19, the following links are very helpful.

Massachusetts Information on the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19):
mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19

Governor Baker's Press Releases re: COVID-19: mass.gov/lists/press-releases-related-to-covid-19

It's our hope that you find this information helpful and that we all come out unscathed on the other end. We look forward to getting back to the regular kind of newsletters later.

On the Go!



The Friends of the Northampton Senior Center have arranged the following outings, and you are welcome to join!

Please make your reservations early as these trips fill up fast! **Call Francine Frenier at the Northampton Senior Center: 413-587-1228.**



June 16: Hildene-Lincoln Family Mansion Tour & Gardens, Manchester, VT. Lunch included at Wilburton Inn overlooking the Green Mountains. Cost is \$117. Receive a \$10 discount if paid in full by May 4, 2020.

July 22: Museum of Fine Arts in Boston celebrates its 150th Anniversary. Thirty five paintings by Monet on display. Included is a family style meal at Maggiano's. Cost is \$108. Receive a \$10 discount if paid in full by June 10, 2020.

Aug. 11: Plymouth 400th Anniversary, Thanksgiving Buffet. Visit the Mayflower II and America's living history museum at Plimoth Plantation. Cost is \$124. Receive a \$10 discount if paid in full by June 24, 2020.

Sept 28- Oct 2: Niagara Falls/Toronto 5-day bus trip. \$525 per person dbl. occupancy. Receive a \$25 discount if paid in full by June 15, 2020. Passport required. Lodging is on Canadian side of the Falls.

Nov 16-17: 2 Day Holiday Shopping at Destiny USA Mall, Syracuse, NY, the second largest mall in the USA. Over 250 stores & dining options. Accommodations at Embassy Suites with breakfast included. Other meals on your own. Cost to be determined per person dbl. occupancy. Receive a \$10 discount if paid in full by September 15, 2020.

Coming May 2021:
11 Day Bus trip to **COLORADO!**



April's Good News!

By Deborah Hollingworth

The good news this month is about **Prescription Advantage**, which is a program for Massachusetts residents designed to help with the cost of their Rx. Sometimes I think this benefit is one of the best kept secrets. It doesn't cost anything, and the application is not too complicated. You can apply online (prescriptionadvantagemma.org) or call them and they will help you complete the application by phone: **1-800-243-4636**. Your SHINE counselor can help too. Ask at your senior center. Even if you have Rx coverage through your health insurance, like a Medicare Advantage plan, or a stand alone Medicare D plan, Prescription Advantage still can help, especially if you have to take expensive brand name Rx and find yourself in the "donut hole" every year.

If your income is less than \$3,122 if single, or \$4,227 if married, you are eligible.



NOTE: if you already have Extra-Help, which is a benefit administered by Social Security, or you have MassHealth, you do not need Prescription Advantage.

But unlike Extra-Help and MassHealth...and this is important— Prescription Advantage **does not count assets**. Only your income.

Prescription Advantage is a subsidy for lower income Massachusetts residents. The less income you have, the more Prescription Advantage helps. In the 1990s, Massachusetts was one of the first states to offer Rx subsidy to support its residents. In 2006, when the federal government launched Medicare D, it was modeled on Massachusetts' Prescription Advantage.

For more information, you can visit prescriptionadvantagemma.org or contact your SHINE counselor to see if you qualify.



Westhampton Council on Aging
3 South Road
Westhampton, MA 01027

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 183
Greenfield MA

**Westhampton
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Your phone rings, the caller ID says it's the Social Security Administration.

- You are told that your Social Security Number has been compromised and you need to confirm your number.
- If you don't cooperate, the "Agent" threatens to take you to court or have your Social Security check blocked—meaning you won't receive your benefits.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

- Never give personal information to unsolicited callers
- Remember, the SSA will never call you asking for your Social Security #
- Don't trust your caller ID
- **HANG UP!**

NWDA Consumer Protection Unit
Greenfield (413) 774-3186
Northampton (413) 586-9225
Working in cooperation with the
Office of the Attorney General